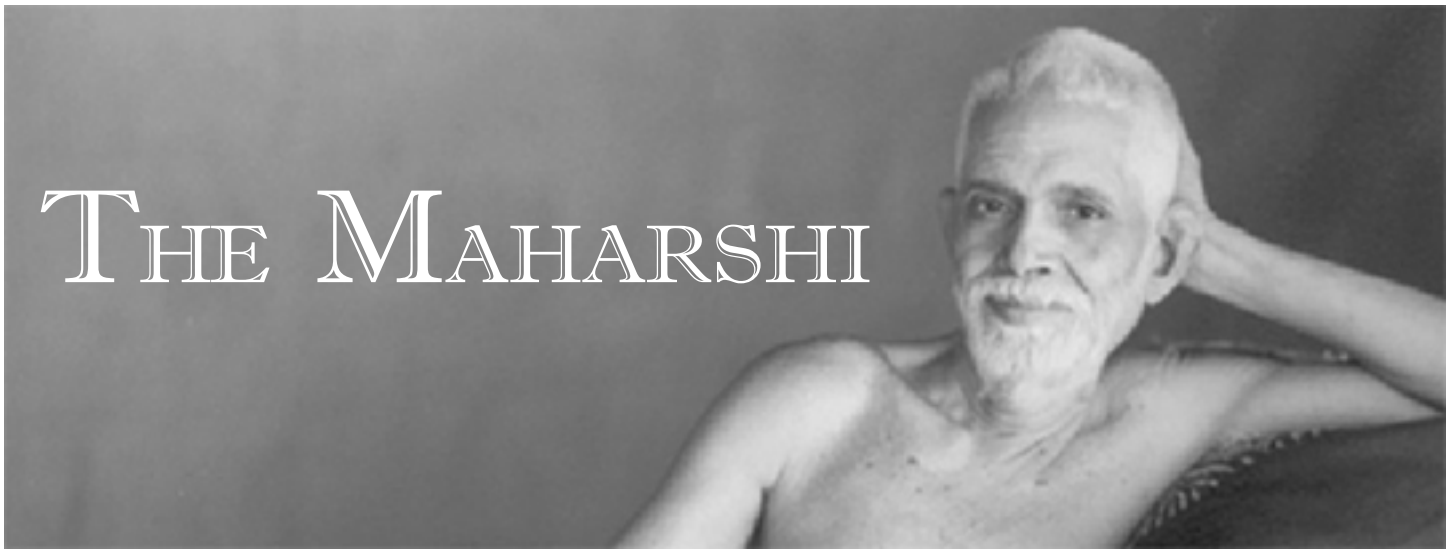

JAN/FEB 2005 VOL. 15, NO. 1

How I Came to the Maharshi - The Golden Flame

Anonymous

BHAGAVAN Sri Ramana Maharshi personifies, to many devotees, the Universal Father. There were many instances when devotees felt that they were looking at their own father when they saw Bhagavan. I vividly remember when a friend of our family who had accompanied us to Sri Ramanasramam in 1947 exclaimed in delight as soon as he saw Bhagavan, "Here is my father, just as he looked in his later life!" Far back as 1933 when my own father was drawn to Bhagavan Ramana for the first time, he actually saw 'his father', with the same physical traits. And as recently as 1966, after the passing of my father, I could not but be touched by the striking resemblance between his and Bhagavan's appearance, although such an impression was not altogether new to me. Indeed, Bhagavan Sri Ramana is the embodiment of 'Fatherhood', that is at once universal and transcendental.

On the sacred occasion of the *Mahakumbabhishkam* of Sri Bhagavan's shrine,[1] many an illustrious pen poured forth its spontaneous homage to His Lotus Feet. Before them, mine is like a candle before the splendor of the sun. Nonetheless, the inner urge to share an experience of mine, which I would call the most sacred and valuable experience in all my life, blots out my hesitation. It is just an insignificant *parijata* flower in the midst of thousands of fragrant roses.

Experiences with Sri Bhagavan and His Grace used to be recounted very often by my father, together with other incidents in his life rich with spiritual lessons. As a boy of about twelve, I used to listen avidly, and as a result these narrations took deep root in me, ripening into an incessant desire to have Bhagavan's *darshan*, to touch Him and to always be near Him. During my daily prayers my mind used to fix itself on the frontispiece photograph of Bhagavan Ramana appearing in his books, and would fervently pray for his *darshan*. As time rolled by, the yearning intensified but no call came. Once or twice I ventured to ask my father about it, but he used to simply brush it aside with the remark, "If and when Bhagavan calls you, you will go."

Then one day the first experience came. I think it was in 1945. One night during deep sleep, I dreamt that I was sitting in the corner of a room, waiting for somebody. I then saw Bhagavan Ramana slowly enter the room. I rushed to Him and held Him around the waist with both my hands,

1. Performed on 18-6-1967 - a detailed account was published in the July 1967 Mountain Path.

crying and supplicating, but Bhagavan simply passed on with apparent unconcern. I woke up and thought about this dream for a long time. It seemed so disappointing that there had been no response from Him. However, I felt confidence since at last I had seen Him and touched Him, which proved that He had not forsaken me.

Now I began to think of Him more and more. Yet again, for a long time nothing happened.

Once more I was becoming desperate and losing hope. Then one dark night, He appeared and initiated me out of His boundless love. This time it was more of a vision than a dream. I was half awake and felt myself rising from the bed and walking into the courtyard of our house. Total silence enveloped the entire surroundings. The blanket of darkness was accentuated by the twinkling stars above. I found myself standing still on a mound of sand, facing westward, looking, looking, looking. Slowly out of the darkness emerged the outline of a hill, shaped exactly like the Holy Arunachala. Emerging, it steadied itself into a discernible silhouette, by remaining darker than the dark background. After a few minutes, a small flame leapt out of the apex of the hill. In the beginning, it was just like an eye in vertical position, but it grew and grew very swiftly until it became a pillar of light with extraordinary brightness, having the hilltop as its base and origin. Its height touched the very heavens. Its splendor was beyond description. It was just the shape of the flame of a lamp when it burns steadily, golden colored, shining as if a thousand suns had arisen together. Its golden rays fell on my body. I was riveted to the spot and found that I could move neither hand nor foot. I stood there as one totally hypnotised, oblivious of anything else but the burning golden flame. My mind was in raptures, throbbing with an ecstatic joy which seemed to burst out of my body. How long I stood like this I cannot say, for time seemed to stop altogether. Then I became conscious of the scene and felt that I was not alone in that spot. With an effort, I turned my face to the right and found Bhagavan Sri Ramana was standing there, looking at me. On his lips played the most bewitching smile, while his eyes poured out boundless compassion and love. When I saw Him, I forgot the *Jyothi* and everything else and tried to fall at his feet. But He gently stopped me by placing His Divine Hand upon my head. Joy of joys! My whole being, inner and outer, thrilled to that Divine touch from the hand of one who is none other than God. Waves of bliss and tranquillity took possession of my whole being. He raised his forefinger and pointed at the Golden Flame and asked me in a voice resembling the sound of silver bells, "Child, do you understand what the *Jyothi* is? This is the real *Karthigai Deepam*."

Suddenly I was wide awake, ushered by consciousness into the care and worry-ridden world. Subsequent visions have followed, all of them showing Bhagavan as the personification of supreme love, but none could ever match the splendor of this first vision and initiation.

I no longer felt dissatisfied at not being able to go to the Ashram in a physical sense, though I must confess, occasionally the desire did arise.

In 1947, I was proceeding to Madras from Coimbatore. The train was speeding along some hills in the night when a prayer to be allowed to visit the Ashram took shape in me. As I was accompanying my father, who did not entertain ideas from children, I did not talk of the prayer to anyone. A few days later, when we were to return to Coimbatore, my father suddenly asked me how I would like to go to Ramanasramam and have darshan of Sri Bhagavan. I am not ashamed to record here that I broke into tears on hearing this, as this was a prayer so graciously granted by Sri Bhagavan.

The next day, we were in our home - Sri Ramanasramam. It was a Friday and a New Moon day. As I entered the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Ramana, I felt that I was submerging in a sea, only this was a sea of blissfull tranquility.

We were there the whole of the forenoon and excepting for a swift, piercing look that Sri Bhagavan blessed me with, nothing happened. Nothing mattered any more. Later, when I heard that Sri Bhagavan had shed His mortal frame, a few teardrops rolled down my cheeks, but my father sternly said, "You are a fool. Where can Bhagavan go?"

Years have rolled by; still the torch burns on, gathering ever more brightness. It is the torch that He, out of His boundless Grace, lit in my heart. Now my children in their turn ask me, "Father, when will Bhagavan *Thatha* come to us?" I feel too full to reply to them, yet sometimes I say, "All in good time, children. Learn to labor and to wait."

When the messenger comes, carrying the authority of inexorable time, may my heart surrender to Him and may my lips whisper, "Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya". — *Mountain Path, January 1969*

Is This Alone False?

By Sadhu Om

Sri Niranjananda Swami, the Sarvadhikari of Sri Ramanasramam, desired that the first major biography of Sri Bhagavan should be written in Tamil. But at the time, B. V. Narasimha Swami was gathering information and facts in order to write a good biography of Sri Bhagavan in English. However, even before this English book was published, a Malayalam scholar came one day to have darshan of Sri Bhagavan. As soon as he saw Sri Bhagavan he was inspired to write his biography, since he had the habit of writing the life story in Malayalam of any great soul he happen to meet. So immediately after arriving he began to gather information from some local people, asking them, "Who is this Ramana Maharshi?" "Where was he born?" and so on.

Not being familiar with Bhagavan or the understanding that the Self-realization of a Jnani is itself his real greatness, some people naturally imagined that Bhagavan should possess all sorts of supernatural powers (*siddhis*) and they therefore spread rumors which attributed such powers to him, thinking that they were thereby glorifying him. Though Bhagavan Ramana taught that all *siddhis* are as trivial as straw and are to be regarded as treacherous friends by the spiritual aspirant, even he was not spared from the rumors created by such people. Unfortunately, it was only from this type of people that the Malayalam scholar quickly gathered biographical information on Bhagavan. Then, within a day, he edited all his notes and completed writing the biography.

Now, according to his biography Bhagavan was a householder, a lawyer from Madurai who had three children. It was also reported that Sri Ramana exhibited a number of *siddhis* in various places. In this way, many fantastic but untrue incidents were contained in that biography. When he had finished writing it, the Malayalam scholar brought the biography to Sri Bhagavan.

Among those living with Sri Bhagavan at that time, no one knew Malayalam except Kunju Swami, and he happened to be absent on that day. Therefore, Bhagavan, who was himself well versed in Malayalam poetry and literature, read the whole biography from beginning to end, stopping only here and there to correct some spelling mistakes, and then returned it to the author without altering even a single statement or idea. Thinking that the biography he had written was correct in every respect, having been seen and corrected by Sri Bhagavan himself, the author was very happy.

Soon the news spread among the devotees in the Asramam that the life of Sri Bhagavan had been written in Malayalam. However, since no one knew that language, they did not know what was written in it.

The next day Kunju Swami returned to the Asramam and the devotees all eagerly told him, "This new devotee has written Bhagavan's biography in Malayalam. Bhagavan has also gone through it and approved it after making all the necessary corrections."

With great surprise and joy, Kunju Swami received the biography from the Malayalam scholar and began to read through it. But when he saw the many untrue reports written in it, he was unable to bear it. He went to the author and tactfully said to him, "Many statements in this biography are totally incorrect! I am afraid that you have not gathered your information from the proper sources."

But with great confidence the author replied, "There is not even a single mistake in it. See, Bhagavan himself has corrected it with his own pen wherever it was necessary. So I am confident that this alone is his correct life history."

Without saying anything further, Kunju Swami brought the biography to Sri Bhagavan and complained, "O Bhagavan! Your own handwriting is found here in many places, so you must have seen this. But how can this all be true?"

"Are all these other things true (pointing to the world), and is this alone false?" replied Sri Bhagavan with a peaceful smile.

Though this sounds humorous, we should notice the profound teaching that lies hidden in it. From his reply it is clear that the ever-attained experience of Sri Bhagavan, who teaches that the world is a mere false appearance, is that even the ego, the individual who sees the world, is itself false. Those who do not know the Self cannot but feel slighted and angry if some historical facts in their life, which would have otherwise given them fame and glory, were omitted or written about in a distorted manner.

In this world, which is full of so-called great ones who strenuously seek praise and publicity for self glorification, how exalted is the greatness of Bhagavan Ramana who was completely indifferent to any amount of disparaging words written about him!

In Bhagavan's view, even the biography we now have, which records his life as we saw it with our own eyes, is as true as this Malayalam biography. That is to say, in Bhagavan's view, even his birth, his attainment of Self-realization, his renunciation and his life as Jagat-Guru are just as real or unreal as this Malayalam biography!

(Reproduced from Arunachala Ramana, *April 1982, a monthly magazine from Andhra Pradesh.)*

He Sees the Truth

O Rama, he sees the truth who sees the body as a product of deluded understanding and as the fountain-source of misfortune, and who knows that the body is not the Self.

He sees the truth who sees that this body pleasure and pain are experienced on account of the passage of time and the circumstances in which one is placed; and that they do not pertain to him.

He sees the truth who sees that he is the omnipresent infinite consciousness which encompasses within itself all that takes place everywhere at all times.

He sees the truth who knows that the Self, which is as subtle as the millionth part of the tip of a hair divided a million times, pervades everything.

He sees the truth who sees that there is no division at all between the self and the other, and that the one infinite light of consciousness exists as the sole reality.

He sees the truth who sees that the non-dual consciousness which indwells all beings is omnipotent and omnipresent.

He sees the truth who is not deluded into thinking that he is the body which is subject to illness, fear, agitation, old age and death.

He sees the truth who sees that all things are strung together in the Self as beads are strung on a thread, and who knows 'I am not the mind'.

He sees the truth who sees all beings in the three worlds as his own family, deserving of his sympathy and protection.

He sees the truth who knows that the Self alone exists and that there is no substance in objectivity.

He is unaffected who knows that pleasure, pain, birth, death, etc., are all the Self only.

He is firmly established in the truth who feels: 'What should I acquire, what should I renounce, when all this is the one Self?'

Salutations to that abode of auspiciousness, who is filled with the supreme realization that the entire universe is truly Brahman alone, which remains unchanged during all the apparent creation, existence and dissolution of the universe.

— Vasistha's Yoga, translated by Swami Venkatesananda

Ground-Breaking of Sri Ramana Maharshi Center in Mauritius

Dr. Anil K. Sharma, President of Arunachala Ashrama, Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi Center, Nova Scotia Canada, and his devoted wife Srimati Vijaya Sharma, recently visited Mauritius and were fortunate to have attended the ground-breaking ceremony of the new Sri Ramana Maharshi Center of Mauritius. Dr. Anil K. Sharma sends the following report of the event:

The ground–breaking ceremony for the new Ramana Maharshi Center of Mauritius took place on October 24, 2004, in Reduit. The desire to start a center in which sincere seekers could learn about the life and teachings of Sri Bhagavan has long been the dream of Srimati Savitri Cuttaree, Sri Gopalakrishna Ramen and other devotees of Sri Ramana Maharshi in Mauritius. By Bhagavan's grace their aspirations are coming to fruition.

The ground-breaking ceremony (*bhumi-puja*) was conducted in the traditional Vedic manner by Pandits Siva Sri Umapathy Sivachariar and Manishekarasivam.

A photo of Sri Bhagavan in *padmasana* pose presided over the ceremonies. After the sacred sounds of the *nagaswaram*, the puja commenced with recitation of sacred texts and offerings to the sacred fire. In a pit that had been especially dug, stones from the holy Arunachala Hill were placed. Sacred gemstones, metals, *vibhuti*, camphor and flowers were spread on the bottom of the pit. The cement bricks that had been consecrated with *kumkum* and *chandanam* were then laid inside. Concluding recitations were rendered with great devotion, and *naivedyam* and *aarti* were offered.

The devotees present were also fortunate to have the company of Swami Pranavananda of the Chinmaya Mission of Mauritius. He spoke very movingly about his deep and abiding relationship with Bhagavan from a very early age, of Sri Bhagavan's teachings from *Naan Yaar* and *Upadesha Undiyar*, and the ideal that Sri Bhagavan presents to each and every one of us.

Verses from "Chatvarimshat" of Ganapati Muni were chanted, and the recitation of "Akshara Manamalai" was heard with reverence.

The devotees were served *prasadam* after the ceremonies. How fortunate we are that wherever we travel, Sri Bhagavan brings us into the company of his family and allows us to remember him.

May Sri Bhagavan's Center allow the people of Mauritius and beyond to come to know of him, and to abide as that in which He lives, the source and substratum of all, the Self.

Srimati Savitri Cuttaree standing next to Dr. Anil Sharma

The Elixir of Youth

By Arthur Osborne

The frosty years have in their grip
This ailing body that at last
Into Death's refuse-bin must slip.
Then let it go,
Quick be it or slow,
Like autumn flower in wintry blast.

For I have drunk youth's elixir,
His joy made firm, his follies fled.
Life like a May-day chorister
Throbs into song.
The heart, grown strong,
Dances and sings where grief lies dead.

This world and body are not me.
They are a dream from which to wake.
Whatever in their fate may be
Cannot destroy
The vibrant joy
Or turn to night the bright daybreak,

When even imperfect sight can bring
Such joyful certitude as this,
Who to the seeming self would cling,
In a barren land where no birds sing,
Lost to Awareness, Being, Bliss?

Letters and Comments

My Heart Is In Tiruvannamalai

I have been thinking of leaving permanently for Tiruvannamalai. However, I have some worldly responsibilities in the West. I don't know what to do. I need guidance. My heart is in Tiruvannamalai every minute and I am stuck here in the West. Do you think you can help or guide me.

In Bhagavan,
A Canadian Devotee

Bhagavan can and does guide you. He knows what is best and arranges circumstances in the lives of sincere spiritual seekers to further their spiritual growth.

He will take you to Tiruvannamalai and He will take you into the inner recesses of your Heart. If you can do the latter, Tiruvannamalai is everywhere, Arunachala is everywhere. Strive for that alone and you will discover complete freedom and peace wherever you may be in this world.

Trust in Him.

—Editor

What Is A Devotee

Please, forgive me for disturbing you.

Since you have been so nice to me previously, I dare to ask you a question I have.

As you told me there was no problem to write to the addresses of devotees on the web site, I did, and I sent a message to the one who lives in Spain. I told him I feel close to Sri Bhagavan and also I have a deep need to communicate. But wanting to be honest, I told him I do not know what a devotee is, and I think that may be preventing him from answering.

So, maybe I should know or understand what is a devotee. I hope you could tell me something.

I sincerely wish any of Ramana Maharshi's Ashrams would be closer to Spain!

Yours faithfully,
A Devotee from Spain

Thank you for your kind email. There is no way you can disturb us. Please do not hesitate to write. Responding to your sincere request gives life a meaning and purpose, as we feel certain that the grace of Sri Ramana is working in you.

The reason this gentleman has not responded to your sincere inquiry is unknown. But what a devotee is can be known or understood.

A devotee is one who has been blessed with the insight that real happiness and fulfillment cannot be achieved by outward endeavors and worldly ambitions, however noble they may be. A real devotee seeks happiness from the true source of happiness that lies within the heart of all. A devotee of Sri Ramana Maharshi discovers that his teachings provide a method to realize that Eternal Truth within and, furthermore, has the experience of grace and peace directly emanating from the presence of Sri Ramana.

We are sure you qualify as a devotee, and feel very fortunate you have blessed us with your sincere words and kind thoughts. —Editor

A Series of Unfortunate Events

I have been thinking about how each time I visit the Ashram I feel at peace, and it wears away after I have returned. I admit that I don't meditate regularly. Especially after this recent visit, I feel badly that I have not done my best. I always have excuses. It is just terrible on my part. I get taken into outward things and feel especially angry because I know better! I am struggling a bit, emotionally. There have been a series of unfortunate events and I am trying to stay positive, but I don't do very well all the time. I wish I could just spend all day with Bhagavan and feel safe and right. I just wanted to hear from you, to tell me, may be, how I can best perceive such times.

I appreciate your time most sincerely. I know that I maybe asking foolish questions, but I just need some assurance and advice.

Regards and gratitude,
yours in Sri Bhagavan,
A Devotee in America

During your last visit we wanted to tell you how Bhagavan's grace can and does work in the life of those who dedicate themselves to the ideal of complete and total dedication to the goal that He has given to us.

You will be surprised how wonderfully carefree and happy you will be when you settle into the life of prayer and meditation and leave all your weights and burdens to Him. Bhagavan purposely gives his children difficulties so they may realize that this birth is meant for the total and complete abidance in the Heart, and there and there alone will we discover the infinite reservoir of peace and happiness.

For the true aspirant and devotee, all happenings in life come only to elevate us, to raise our level of

awareness to the state wherein we experience that it is HE alone who is the Doer and we are but puppets whose strings are pulled by the Master's hand. Bhagavan says, "He knows what is best, and when and how to do it. Leave everything to Him alone. You have no longer any cares. All your cares are His."

So be at peace. Repeat His name "Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya" with faith and devotion whenever you can. He will guide and protect you. It is His responsibility, not yours. And your brothers and sisters at Bhagavan's Ashram are always here at your call. *—Editor*

The Soul of Silence

Sri Swami Thapovanji Maharaj, Uttarkasi, Himalayas

Silence is Truth. Silence is Bliss. Silence is Peace and hence, Silence is Atman. To live this Silence is the Goal. It is Moksha. It is the end of this endless cycle of births and deaths. Sri Ramana Maharshi was an embodiment of Silence. He was Silence Itself. Therefore he did not preach the Silence. Only when one comes back to the 'noise' from the Silence, can one preach the Silence. How can the Silence preach itself through Silence ?

Nearly forty years ago, I had the good fortune of having the darhsan of the Maharshi at Tiruvannamalai when he was living there in a cave along with his mother and brother. One midday I, a young Brahmachari at that time, climbed to the cave, saw the Maharshi there, and placing a bunch of bananas at his feet, bowed and sat before him. At the same moment some monkeys jumped onto the scene, scrambled for the fruits and ran away with them.

The Maharshi looked lovingly into my face. That was all. He spoke but Silence; not a word passed between us. A supreme, a dynamic and Divine Silence prevailed. An hour passed by, all in Silence. He rose for his bhiksha. I too rose from my seat, bowed again and walked down the Hill. The Divine Silence sank deeper and deeper into me with each step! Someone came running behind me and pressed me to take some prasad. Thankfully, I declined. I was full, so full with the Silence. The Maharshi called him back and advised him not to press me. Then I continued walking away.

Maharshi was an image of Peace and Silence. It is the first duty of all those who admire and follow him to seek that Divine Silence. The enquiry into that Divine Silence is but the enquiry "Who am I?"

O Man! Enquire and be immersed in that inner Silence. Do all works of this world to reach that goal, to attain that Divine Silence. The ocean's surface dances in waves, laughs in sparkling foam, roars as its thunderous waves clap and clash! And yet deep in its inner vaults it rests in eternal Silence and Peace. Without such a divine and spiritual depth, the works and activities of this universe prove worthless and aimless.

"Works should be undertaken and pursued to take us ultimately to the workless Abode of Divine Silence and endless Peace." This is the secret doctrine of all our Vedas and ancient Scriptures. *— The Call Divine, 1953*

Ramana Satsangs

Satsangs with recitations, songs, readings and meditation have been going on in a few places near or in large cities. Some of them are weekly. If you would like to attend any of these, please contact the individuals below for more information.

Ann Arbor, MI — Gayatri & Mohan (734-623-7199 cedararbor@yahoo.com)
Atlanta Area — Mangalam Kalyanam (678-423-7324 / smoothcutter@hotmail.com)
Boston Area — David & Anna Klegon (617-928-1487 /dklegon@rcn.com)
Connecticut Area — Prashanth & Shobana (860-446-9320 / vprashanth@man.com)
Miami, Ft. Lauderdale Area — David & Janet Rubinson (954-755-4758 / arunahill@earthlink.net)
Ottawa, Canada — Anantha Padmanabhan (613-733-8250 / padmanabhan_ananth@hotmail.com)
San Francisco Area — Swaminathan & Sangeeta (510-979-1679 / nachiketas@hotmail.com)
Toronto, Canada — Krishnan & Padma Sastri (905-849-6005 / psastri@hotmail.com)
Washington, D.C. Area — Prakash & Mamtha Adiseshan (703-502-4892 /adiseshan@worldnet.att.net)